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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to account for what at first appears to be a unique constraint in the formation of A-not-A questions. Most previous analyses employ the pragmatic notion of focus. This paper argues in favor of a presuppositional account, which has wide empirical coverage and is independently motivated and more theoretically coherent than the notion of focus. The first section of the paper introduces the question types in Chinese and two constraints on the formation of A-not-A questions. In section 2, previous analyses are critically surveyed. Section 3 elucidates the problems with the notion of focus both in general and in these specific analyses. Section 4 puts forward a presuppositional account. In section 5, independent motivations for the proposal are given. Section 6 provides a summary of the paper. (Contains 23 references.) (NAV)

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FOCUS, PRESUPPOSITION AND THE FORMATION OF A-NOT-A QUESTIONS IN CHINESE*

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ABSTRACT.

Previous analyses use 'focus' to explain a restriction on the formation of A-not-A questions. But 'focus' has at least two distinct senses. Both senses are empirically inadequate in explaining the restriction; and, if used indiscriminately, they would lead to theoretical incoherence. We suggest a simple principle, i.e., no questioned part can be presupposed. Apart from its empirical and theoretical superiority, the principle is independently needed for the same restriction in particle and other choice type questions, not to mention the mutual exclusiveness between questions. Apparent exceptions to the principle are due to separate syntactic constraints.

1. INTRODUCTION.

The A-not-A question has been a hot topic in recent years. The issues that have been extensively investigated include: its proper categorization and relationship with other questions (Lü 1985, Zhu 1985, Yuan 1993); its pragmatics (Li&Thompson 1979, Yuan 1993); the dialectal distribution and diachronic development of the subtypes (Zhang 1990); the mechanism of its formation, i.e. whether by reduplication or by coordination reduction or anaphoric ellipsis (Huang 1988, Dai 1990); even the mode of argumentation used in the lively debates (Wu 1990). However, with the exception

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of a few works, there has been relatively little attention on the central issue of the present paper.

The present paper aims to account for what at first appears to be a unique constraint in the formation of A-not-A questions. With the exception of Ernst (1994), all previous analyses (Lü1985, Li&Thompson 1979, Tang 1986) employ the pragmatic notion of focus. I argue against them in favor of a presuppositional account, which has wide empirical coverage and is independently motivated and more theoretically coherent than the notion of focus.

The organization of the paper is as follows. In the remaining portion of this section, I will introduce the question types in Chinese and two constraints on the formation of A-not-A questions. In Section 2, I will critically survey the previous analyses. Section 3 elucidates the problems with the notion of focus both in general and in these specific analyses. Section 4 puts forward a presuppositional account. In Section 5, independent motivations for the proposal are given. Section 6 provides a summary.

1.1. Questions in Chinese

The four main question types[1] in Mandarin Chinese are exemplified in (1):

(1) a. Particle Question:
Ni qu ma?
you go PRT.
'Are you going?'

b. 'Wh' Question:

Ni yao shenme?

you want what

'What do you want?'

c. Alternative Questions:

Ni qu haishi ta qu?

you go or he go

'Are you going or is he going?'

d. A-not-A Question:

Ni qu bu qu?

you go not go

'Are you going?'

In (1a), an example of the particle question is given. It is so named because it is marked by the sentence final particle *ma*. In (1b), the Chinese counterpart of the wh-question in English is given. I will continue to use the term wh-question out of convenience. Given in (1c) is an example of the alternative question, which is characterized by the *haishi* between the choices. The last type in (1d) is called the A-not-A question, due to the immediate juxtaposition of the positive and negative choices. But A-not-A is really a cover label for a number of different surface realizations of the same semantic operation. Not only the symmetry suggested by A-not-A is not

always realized, the location as well as the form of the negative element can deviate from the pattern as well. [2]

1.2. Constraints on the formation of A-not-A questions

One of the constraints is illustrated in (2):

(2) a. Ni xiang bu xiang qu?
you think not think go
'Would you like to go?'

b. *Ni xiang qu bu qu?
you think go not go
'Would you like to go?'

When there are more than one verbs in the verb phrase and it is not the verb phrase as a whole that is copied, the copied verb must be the first one. While it may be important for the formation of A-not-A questions, we will not focus on this constraint, except to point out its distinctness from the central constraint introduced below (for more discussion see 4.3) .

There is one initially surprising and yet very robust constraint on the formation of A-not-A questions, exemplified by (3) below:

(3) a. Ni chang qu.
you often go
'You often go/went'

b. Ni chang qu ma?
you often go PRT.
'Do/did you often go?'

c. *Ni chang qu bu qu?
you often go not go
Do/did you often go?'

Although the particle question (3b) corresponding to the declarative sentence (3a) is fine, the A-not-A question (3c) is bad. The problem here is with the frequency adverb *chang* . But it will be wrong to conclude that adverbs as a class are the cause, as some adverbs do occur in such questions (Ernst 1994) and conversely, factors other than adverbs can cause ungrammaticality as well. Given in (4) are more ill-formed A-not-A questions, caused by a multitude of different factors:

(4) a. manner adverbs:
*Ta jingjingde tiao mei tiao wu?
he quietly dance neg. dance-dance
'Did he quietly dance?'

b. intensifiers:
*Ta hen xihuan bu xihuan ni?
he very like not like you
'Does he like you very much?'

c. focusing adverbs (*jiu, cai, lian...dou*):

*Ni jintian jiu qu bu qu?

you today JIU go not go

'Are you going (as early as) today?'

*Ni mingtian cai qu bu qu?

you tomorrow CAI go not go

'Are you going (as late as) tomorrow?'

*Ta lian zidian dou nian bu nian?

he LIAN dictionary DOU read not read

'Does he even read dictionaries?'

d. iterative adverbs:

*Ni you chi mei chi?

you again eat neg. eat

'Did you eat again?'

e. temporal clauses:

*Ta chi bu chi fan yiqian xi shou?

he eat not eat food before wash hand

'Does he wash hands before eating?'

f. 'focusing' construction(*'shi', 'shi...de', 'de..shi'*):

*Ni shi mingtian qu bu qu?

you BE tomorrow go not go

'Are you going tomorrow?'

*Ni shi zai jia chi mei chi fan de?
you BE at home eat neg. eat food DE
'Is it at home that you ate?

*Ni chi mei chi de shi pingguo?
you eat not eat DE BE apple

g. comparison:

*Ta bi ni congming bu congming?
he compare you smart not smart
'Is he smarter than you?'

h. aspectual verbs:

*Ni tingzhi da bu da qiang?
you stop beat not beat gun
'Have you stopped firing?'

i. factive verbs:

*Ni jide ta qu mei qu?
you remember he go neg. go
'Do you remember if he went?'

j. predicative complements[3]:

*Ta pao mei pao de hen kuai?
he run neg. run DE very fast

'Did he run very fast?'

k. wh-questions:

*Shei qu bu qu?
who go not go

l. alternative questions:

*Ni he bu he CHA haishi he bu he KAFEI?
you drink not drink tea or drink not drink coffee
'Are you drinking TEA or COFFEE?'

The observation of the constraint is not entirely new, although none of the previous analyses mentioned any other factor apart from adverbial adjuncts.

2. PREVIOUS ANALYSES

2.1. Lü (1976, published in 1985)

Lü described basically the same constraint (albeit with only adverbial cases) in a very different way [p.243; translated from Chinese by z.s.z.]:

(5) If there is an adverb modifying the verb but the focus of question is on the adverb, then the adverb has to be repeated along with the verb. .... If the focus of question is not on the adverb, the adverb is not repeated.

The following example was used by Lü to illustrate:

(6) a. Ni jiu qu bu jiu qu?
you just go not just go
'Are you going right away?'

b. *Ni jiu qu bu qu?
you just go not go
'Are you going right away?'

c. Ni hai qu bu qu?
you still go not go
'Are you still going?'

To account for the contrast between jiu and hai seen in (6b) and (6c), Lü invoked the notion of focus but did not say why focus must be on jiu but not on hai.

2..2. Li&Thompson (1979, henceforth L&T)

To account for both restrictions introduced earlier, L&T (p.199) gave the generalization in (7):

(7) The predicative element V of the v-not-v question must be the focus.

The problem of **Ni chang qu bu qu* would presumably be explained by L&T in this way: in this question meaning 'do you often go', the focus is on the adverb 'often' rather than the verb 'go'; since the verb 'go' is not the focus, it cannot be one of the choices.

As (7) is meant to cover the 'first verb only' constraint as well, the following additional assumption, not explicitly stated by L&T, is also necessary:

(8) The first verb must be the focus.

Like Lü, L&T did not say what constitutes a focus.

2.3. Tang (1986)

Tang objected to L&T's analysis on two grounds. First, he objected to L&T's lack of independent criteria for focus and hinted at possible circularity. Tang's criticism would be well-directed if it were specifically targeted to L&T's implicit extension of the focus account to cover the 'first verb only' condition, which seems to be a purely syntactic phenomenon (see section 4.3. for justification). The attribution of focus status to the first verb of a multiple-verb sequence needs to be independently motivated in order to be free of circularity.

Tang's second objection is towards the central claim of L&T's analysis, namely, the V in A-not-A questions has to be the focus. A piece of Tang's counter-evidence is given in (9) :

(9) Ta shi bu shi mingtian lai
he be not be tomorrow come
'Is he coming tomorrow?'

Tang argued that the focus is neither on the verb *shi* nor on the verb *lai* but on *mingtian*. Tang may have been guided by contrastive stress or the fact that focus immediately follows the marker of focus *shi* in 'cleft' constructions (Teng 1979).

But regardless of the correctness of his intuition about the location of focus, Tang's own proposal, given in (10), is quite problematic:

(10) The predicative element of the A-not-A question must either be the focus of the sentence or be such that it c-commands the information focus of the sentence.

Unfortunately, despite his use of the syntactic notion 'c-command', Tang's own analysis is also based on the undefined notion of 'focus'. Secondly, the disjunctive form of the statement signaled by the connective *or* suggests that a generalization is missed. Thirdly, the syntactic notion of c-command, meant to capture the scope relationship between the focus and the verb of A-not-A questions, does not seem to work. It is true that in his examples of well-formed questions with the higher verb *shi*, the verb indeed c-commands what he takes to be the focus; and in his examples of ill-formed questions, the verbs are indeed c-commanded by various kinds of

adverbial phrases. But using his implicit 'contrastive' sense of focus, we find that focus can fall on non-verbal elements as well:

(11) Ni mingtian qu bu qu?
you tomorrow go not go
'Are you going tomorrow?'

Contrary to Tang, the focus constituent *mingtian* c-commands rather than is c-commanded by *qu*, and yet the question is well-formed. In case there is any doubt concerning what c-commands what, it may help to see that in (11), the focus can also be shifted to the subject *ni*, which, by any account, has to c-command the verb. The examples in (12) show the irrelevance of c-command in a minimal contrast where the c-command relationship is presumably held constant and only the adverbs differ:

(12) a. Ni hai qu bu qu?
you still go not go
'Are you still going?'

b. *Ni ye qu bu qu?
you also go not go
'Are you also going?'

To conclude, although his criticism of L&T concerning the identification of focus is reasonable, Tang's own proposal suffers from the use of the undefined notion of focus and the unmotivated

use of the notion of c-command. His disjunctive statement suggests the missing of a generalization.

2.4. Ernst (1994)

Ernst (1994) was restricted to the issue of why certain adjuncts such as *yiding* 'definitely' and *luan* 'chaotically' cause ill-formed A-not-A (the A-not-AB subtype) questions. It assumed Huang (1988)'s analysis of A-not-AB questions as derived from reduplication triggered by the question operator [+Qu]. Ernst argued that the ungrammaticality of A-not-A questions with certain adjuncts is due to these adjuncts' c-commanding [+Qu] at LF. Ernst's is the only analysis with no reference to the notion of focus.

Regardless of whether the account is successful with respect to the A-not-AB subtype, it is clear that with his assumption (following Huang) that the AB-not-A subtype is not derived the same way as the A-not-AB subtype, his analysis is unable to account for obviously the same restriction observed in AB-not-A questions:

(13) *Ta yiding qu xuexiao bu qu?
ta definitely go school not go
'Is he definitely going to school?'

Nor can his analysis cover the same constraint exhibited in alternative questions, which are often posited as the sources of (at least some subtypes of) A-not-A questions:

(14) *Ta yiding qu haishi bu qu?
ta definitely go or not go
'Is he definitely going?'

In contrast, all the subtypes of A-not-A questions and alternative questions are covered in the present presuppositional account, as can be seen in Section 5.1.

3. FOCUS.

Since Lü (1985), L&T(1979) and Tang (1986) all make crucial use of the notion 'focus', it will do well for us to examine the notion in some details.

3.1. What is 'focus'

In linguistic analyses, the notion of focus has often been invoked, but its exact nature has rarely been clarified. A review of the literature yields a highly confusing picture. The terms 'focus', 'focus structures', 'focusing devices' and 'focusing constructions' have been used to refer to a rather large, by no means homogenous, set of phenomena. The list from Taglicht (1984)'s book on 'focus and emphasis' in English is very inclusive[4]:

(15) cleft-sentences, pseudo-clefts
wh-questions, alternative questions
Comparative structure

focusing adverbs
Intonation nucleus

Much more narrowly circumscribed is the list from Rochemont *et al.* (1991), which was argued to form a class of 'stylistic rules'. Interestingly, the list has no overlap with the one from Taglicht:

(16) PP and Rel-Clause Extraposition
Directional/Locative Inversion
Preposing around be
Presentational there insertion
Heavy NP shift

In the Chinese linguistics literature, we find a similar disparity. A list of focus devices in Lü (1985) includes such things as:

(17) contrastive stress
shi/shi..de/...de shi (cleft/cleft'(past)/pseudo-cleft)
wh-questions

Stating that focusability is a matter of degree, Xu&Li (1993:83) gave the following focus hierarchy (from strong to weak):

(18) emphatic elements marked by *shi*
emphatic elements marked by *lian/jiu/cai*
quantity expressions
objects of *ba* construction

other modifiers

heads

topics

Obviously, the notion of focus is in need of clarification. This is by no means a new revelation[5]. There seem to be at least two different senses of 'focus' used in the literature. We may well wonder how A-not-A questions are focus constructions, on a par with cleft sentences and those with contrastive accent? The attribution of focus status to A of A-not-A seems to be based on a 'new information' definition. But focus as 'new information' seems to be quite different from 'the textual/packaging process of focusing', which gives rise to semantic contrastiveness and structurally marked form.

A rather interesting consequence results if we lump the different 'focus devices' together: their possible co-occurrence:

(19) NI yao shenme?
you want what
'What do YOU want?'

In both English and Chinese wh-questions, there can be contrastive accent on constituents other than the wh-words, the supposedly focal elements. What do we take as the focus in such cases?

Even in co-ocurrence potential, all 'focus devices' are not equal. For example, the 'stylistic rules' of Rochemont *et al.* all have the 'freezing' property and cannot undergo further syntactic focusing

operations. Neither can contrastive accent be used to shift the focus in any of them. Similarly, the English alternative question on Taglicht's list of 'focus constructions' cannot have contrastive accent. Hence (20) is ill-formed, when it has the interpretation of 'Do you want TEA or do you want COFFEE?'

(20) *Do YOU want TEA or COFFEE?

Neither can it accommodate 'focusing devices' such as wh-questions:

(21) *Who wants TEA or COFFEE?

Interestingly, the Chinese counterpart of the alternative question is subject to the same constraint[6].

The necessity to entertain different kinds of focus is also demonstrated by the need to differentiate the different versions below:

(22) a. Ni yao chi shenme?
'What do you want to eat?'

b. Ni yao chi SHENME?
'What is it that you want to eat?'

To the extent that we need to distinguish the contrastively accented version (22b) from the 'plain' version (22a), we have to say that

there are at least two kinds of focus, i.e. 'new information' focus versus 'contrastive' focus[7].

3.2.Where is the 'focus'

If we use the 'contrastive' definition of focus, the rigid identification of focus with the verb in A-not-A questions cannot be maintained. Let's start with Tang's counterexample against L&T, reproduced here as (23):

(23) Ta shi bu shi MINGTIAN lai?
he be not be tomorrow come
'Is he coming TOMORROW?'

If Tang's criteria for focus are phonological prominence and semantic contrast, then surely he is right that the word *mingtian* is the focus since it is contrastively accented and the interpretation is a contrastive one, i.e. 'is he coming tomorrow as opposed to any other day?' But Tang did not follow his criteria all the way through, which would have shown that not only the verb *shi* can be focused, the subject *ta* can be focused as well:

(24) a. Ta SHI BU SHI mingtian lai?
he be not be tomorrow come
'IS IT TRUE OR NOT that he is coming tomorrow?'

b. TA shi bu shi mingtian lai?

he be not be tomorrow come
'Is HE coming tomorrow?'

The shift of focus can be achieved even where there is a clear default focus:

(25) Ta SHI BU SHI zuotian lai de?
he be not be yesterday come DE
'DID he come yesterday?'

The default location of accent here surely is not on the verb *shi* but on *zuotian*, because the express purpose of the *shi...de* construction used here is to highlight the constituent immediately following *shi*. The default interpretation is not 'DID he come yesterday?' but rather 'Did he come YESTERDAY OR ANY OTHER DAY?'. But (25) shows that it is still possible to obtain the first, albeit more marked, interpretation by shifting the accent onto the verb *shi*. The variability of the location of focus is not just true of cases with the higher verb *shi*, which is known to have special properties with respect to A-not-A questions (Zhu 1985, Zhang 1990). It can just as easily be true in general:

(26) Ni mingtian qu bu qu?
you tomorrow go not go
'Are you going tomorrow?'

Both *ni* and *mingtian* can be focused, as well as the verb *qu*.

Under the 'new information' interpretation of focus, which L&T seems to have in mind, focus cannot be identified with the verb either. It can be shown that new information, hence focus, is not always carried by the verb in A-not-A questions. A mini-dialog will make this clear:

(27) [A: Zhangsan qu bu qu?]
Zhangsan go not go
'Is Zhangsan going?'

[B: Ta bu qu.]
he not go
'He is not going.'

A: Na LISI qu bu qu? / Na Lisi ne?
then Lisi go not go then Lisi NE
'Is LISI going then?' /'How about Lisi?'

In the exchange above, *qu bu qu* in the last turn can only be taken, by any definition, as given (Prince, 1981). Hence it cannot be 'new', assuming 'new' to be the complement of 'given'. That is why it is possible to replace it with the pro-form *ne*, which means 'how about'. On the other hand, the subject *Lisi* may well be 'new', as this may well be the first time *Lisi* is mentioned in the discourse.

The question 'where is the focus' can now be answered: assuming either a 'contrastive' or 'new information' definition, the focus of A-not-A questions cannot be identified with the verb, as

Li&Thompson claimed; neither can it be syntactically related to the verb by c-command, as Tang proposed. The focus is variable in location, as a function of the context. The variable location of focus in particle questions has been amply demonstrated by Lü (1985). But in wh- and A-not-A questions with allegedly built-in focus, the possibility of variable focus seems to have never been raised.

The futility to predict the location of focus and 'new information' on the basis of syntactic form alone is related to another interesting phenomenon. The wide-spread assumption that the positive or negative choice in A-not-A questions always constitutes the answer is actually not true. Compare the following two question and answer sequences, both with the verb *shi* in the questions:

(28) A: Ni shi bu shi mingtian lai?
you be not be tomorrow come
'Are you coming tomorrow?'

B: Shi/shi de/shi mingtian lai.
be/be DE/be tomorrow come
'Yes, (I am) coming tomorrow.'

A': Ni shi bu shi mingtian lai yixia?
you be not be tomorrow come a bit
'Could you come tomorrow?'

B': Hao ba/hao de/yiding/mei wenti.
good BA/good DE/sure/no problem

'O.K./Sure/no problem.'

While both questions have the same verb *shi*, the answers required are different. The first question must be answered by a number of affirmative phrases starting with *shi*, but the second question must be answered with any sort of consent, none of which can include *shi*. The reason is that the first question is an information question while the second one is a tentative request, its tentativeness jointly expressed by the formulaic *shi bu shi* and the phrase *yixia*.

3.3. 'Focus' as an explanation

The different senses of focus and the lack of predictable relationship between focus and structure in A-not-A questions are not the only problems. Even if focus is relatable in some principled way to the verb, it still does not explain why A-not-A questions cannot be formed with non-focal verbs and why these verbs cannot be focused on in the first place. Focusing on the verbs in ill-formed A-not-A questions will not improve the questions in any way:

(29) *Ni chang QU BU QU?
you often go not go
'Do you often go?'

Obviously, something is preventing the verb *qu* from being focused. To conclude, focus alone cannot explain the restriction. Something else must be appealed to.

4. PRESENT ANALYSIS

4.1. A presuppositional account

Under the present analysis, the constraint is stated as follows:

(30) The V of A-not-A questions cannot be presupposed.

Let me illustrate with the example **Ni chang qu bu qu* (you often go not go). To answer the question 'Do you often go', both the positive version 'I often go' and the negative one 'I don't often go', presuppose 'I sometimes go'. Both the question and the answer are about the frequency of going but not the going itself. But in the ill-formed question, exactly the going is questioned. The frequency adverbial *chang* then is a presupposition trigger.

As seen above, one standard test for presupposition is constancy under negation, that is, if a proposition survives negation, then it is a presupposition. We can also use answers to questions as a test for presupposition in questions, that is, it is not possible to answer with only presupposed material. In response to the question 'Do you often go', we have to include as part of our answer the non-presupposed element *often* and not just the verb *go*:

(31) A: Ni chang qu ma?
you often go PRT.
'Do you often go?'

B: (Wo) chang qu.
(I) often go
'I often go./yes, often.'

*(Wo) qu.
(I) go
'I go.'

Using the two tests, we can easily verify that all the ill-formed questions of (4) indeed have presupposed verbs. The different presupposition generating elements are reproduced below:

(32)
a. manner adverbs: *jingjingde, manmande*, etc.
b. intensifiers: *hen, feichang*, etc.
c. focusing adverbs: *jiu, cai, lian...dou*
d. iteratives: *you, ye*, etc.
e. temporal clauses: *V yiqian, V yihou, V de shihou*, etc.
f. 'focusing' construction: *shi, shi...de, de..shi*, etc.
g. comparison
h. aspectual verbs: *tingzhi, kaishi*, etc.
i. factive verbs: *houhui, jide*, etc.
j. predicative complements
k. wh-questions
l. alternative questions

4.2. Distinctness of the present account

The present proposal is not a notational variant of analyses using the notion of focus. I concur with Rochemont *et al.* and maintain that presupposition in the usual sense is not the complement of focus (1990:22), contrary to Chomsky (1971), Jackendoff (1972) and Akmajian (1979), whose presupposition defined in terms of focus is an altogether different notion. Jackendoff (ibid.) distinguishes his 'presupposition as complement of focus' from what he calls 'inherent lexical presuppositions'. As pointed out by Rochemont *et al.*, the distinctness of presupposition and focus can be seen in the possibility of focusing on the complements to presupposition-generating factive verbs. This is shown in (33), where part of the complement to the factive verb *upset* is focused:

(33) John is upset that Mary MARRIED Steve.

For completeness, the other half of the argument can also be given, that is, the focal part of a prototypical focusing construction can nonetheless contain presuppositions of the standard sort:

(34) It was the King of France that came to my room.

The definite description 'the King of France' is no doubt in the focal position and yet it contains the presupposition 'there is a king of France'.

The non-focal material (assuming a contrastive sense of focus) can be but need not be presupposed. In the following particle

question with the focus marker *shi*, the non-focal verb *qu* is no doubt presupposed, as can be seen from the impossible answer and the inability to form a corresponding A-not-A question:

(35) A: Ni shi MINGTIAN qu ma?
you be tomorrow go PRT.
'Is it TOMORROW that you are going ?'

*Ni shi MINGTIAN qu bu qu?
you be tomorrow go not go
'Is it TOMORROW that you are going ?'

B: *Qu.
go
'Yes.'

But in the following particle question without the focus marker *shi*, the non-focal part is NOT presupposed, as can be seen from the possible answer and the well-formedness of the corresponding A-not-A question:

(36) A: Ni MINGTIAN qu ma?
you tomorrow go PRT
'Are you going TOMORROW?'

A': Ni MINGTIAN qu bu qu?
you tomorrow go not go

'Are you going TOMORROW?'

B: Qu.
go

Presuposition in Chomsky *et al.*'s sense, i.e. as complement of focus, does not cause ungrammaticality:

(37) TA qu bu qu?
he go not go
'Is HE going?'

If *ta* is the focus, then *qu* is its complement and hence presupposed in the sense of Chomsky et al. But no grammaticality results.

Our analysis is not the same as one that employs the notion of 'given' either. The distinctness of presupposition from givenness is shown by Allerton (1978:136)'s two examples[8]:

(38) a. When did a polar bear last kiss a crocodile?
presupposition: a polar bear did once kiss a crocodile
given: none;

b. Did he speak to her there at that time?
presupposition: none
given: he, her, there, that

(38a) shows that a question can have presuppositions yet no given elements while (38b) demonstrates the opposite, i.e., there can be many given elements but no presupposition.

Unlike presupposition, givenness of the verbal element does not prevent the formation of A-not-A questions:

(39) A: Ni chi bu chi fan?
you eat not eat rice
'Will you eat rice?'

B: Wo bu chi.
I not eat
'I won't.'

A: Na ni chi bu chi MIAN? /Na MIAN ne?
then you eat not eat noodle then noodle NE
'Then will you eat NOODLES?'/Then how about NOODLES?'

The second question by A is well-formed although the verb *chi* is 'given' due to the preceding question and answer pair. Thus it is possible to replace it with the pro-form *ne* 'how about'.

Not only is our presuppositional account distinct from accounts using the notion of focus and given, the negative form of our generalization also contrasts with the positive formulations of L&T and Tang. Instead of stipulating what must be focused, our generalization only states what cannot be questioned, i.e. the presupposed. The advantages are several. The negative formulation

captures the generalization that is missed by Tang's disjunctive statement 'the verb has to be the focus or c-commands the focus'. More importantly, presupposition provides an explanation for the restriction on the formation of A-not-A questions that the 'focus' accounts fail to give. Lastly, our formulation allows for the very likely interactions between focus and presupposition.

4.3. A separate syntactic constraint

So far, we have glossed over the 'the first verb only constraint', which says that when there are more than one verbs present and only one verb is copied, only the first verb is eligible for the process. The relevant minimal pair is repeated below:

(40) a. Ni xiang bu xiang qu?
you think not think go
'Would you like to go?'

b. *Ni xiang qu bu qu?
you think go not go
'Would you like to go?'

This cannot be accounted for by the presuppositional analysis just advanced. The ill-formedness of (40b) cannot be attributed to the presuppositional status of the verb *qu*. It is not true that in both *xiang qu* and *bu xiang qu*, *qu* is presupposed. In fact, just the

opposite seems to be true. In both cases, *xiang* seems to be presupposed.

But the example does not invalidate the present account, because it represents a well-defined class of phrases with multiple verbal elements, having no overlap with the cases that have been successfully accounted for. At most, the example shows that the presupposition account is not sufficient to cover all the constraints in the formation of A-not-A questions and that a modular analysis is called for.

It turns out that this constraint is of a very different kind from the one we discussed; it is not a semantic/pragmatic constraint, but a syntactic one. The 'first verb only' condition is not uncommon at all. English Subject-Aux Inversion in question formation also involves the initial verbal element only, regardless of where the focus happens to be. This mismatch between syntax and semantics/pragmatics is also seen in the syntactic realization of negation elements. English favors the matrix verb as the locus for negation, despite the possible subordinate clause semantic scope. The semantic interpretation of 'I don't think I will go' is not what the surface structure suggests but rather 'I think that I will not go'. Interestingly, the Chinese translation of 'I don't think I will go' is *Wo xiang wo bu hui qu* and not **Wo bu xiang wo hui qu.* Although English and Chinese differ in this regard, when a verb phrase has multiple verbal elements, Chinese is like English in treating the first verb as the locus of negation and other operators. This is true not just in A-not-A questions; it is true in declarative sentences as well:

(41) a. Wo bu xiang qu
I not intend go
'I don't intend to go.=I intend not to go'

b. ?Wo xiang bu qu.
I intend not go
'I don't intend to go.=I intend not to go'

Our modular analysis separating the syntactic constraint from the semantic/pragmatic constraint is superior than the unitary analyses of both L&T and Tang (Lü simply stated the facts without explanation; Ernst did not mention this constraint at all). In order to maintain their focus account, L&T would be forced to interpolate that the focus falls on the first verb in cases of multiple verb sequences. In the absence of positive evidence of focushood, their account would suffer from circularity. The equivocal statement of Tang would accommodate focus on any verb in a multiple verb sequence but would fail when the focus is on any non-verbal elements. Our syntactic constraint is not an *ad hoc* extension of another constraint but is fairly well motivated in other parts of grammar and cross-linguistically. Contrary to appearance, the added complexity is deceptive, as it does not have to be stated for A-not-A questions specifically.

4.4. An apparent exception

The presuppositional account seems to have exceptions. An example involving a resultative compound is a case in point:

(42) Ni chi mei chi wan?
you eat neg. eat finish
'Have you finished eating?'

According to our account, the verb *chi* should not be presupposed, since otherwise the A-not-A question cannot be formed. In fact, this is not the case, as we can see from both tests on presupposition. First, the negation test:

(43) Ni chi wan le.
you eat finish LE
'you finished eating'

Ni mei chi wan.
you neg.eat finish
'you did not finish eating'

presupposition: Ni chi le. 'you ate.'

In both the positive and negative versions of the sentence, the presupposition 'you ate' remains constant. Indeed, the question *ni chi mei chi wan* is really about whether the eating has finished and not about whether the eating ever took place. The test using question-answer sequence confirms this also:

(44) A: Ni chi mei chi wan?
you eat neg. eat finish
'Have you finish eating?'

B: (Wo chi) wan le.
I eat finish ASP./finish ASP.
'I finished (eating).'

B': *(Wo) chi le.
I eat ASP.
'I ate.'

We can answer either with the verb *chi* together with its phase complement *wan* or with the phase complement alone, but not with just the verb.

Both tests show that the verb 'eat' and not the phasal complement 'finish' is presupposed. Yet interestingly, although the phasal complement is not presupposed, it cannot be made the A in A-not-A, as is shown below:

(45) *Ni chi wan mei wan
you eat finish neg. finish
'Have you finish eating?'

What we have seen is exactly the opposite of what is predicted by the presuppositional account. The same pattern is also observed with the potential forms[9]:

(46) a. Ni chi bu chi de wan?
you eat not eat DE finish
'Can you finish?'

b. *Ni chi de wan bu wan?
you eat DE finish not finish
'Can you finish?'

But the exception to our generalization is only apparent. Whatever accounts for the minimal contrast will have nothing to do with the difference in presuppositional structure, because the same pattern is observed with mono-morphemic disyllabic verbs, where it is senseless to talk about presuppositional structure within the morpheme:

(47) a. Ta you bu you mo?
he hu- not hu- mor
'Is he humorous?'

b. *Ta you mo bu mo?
he hu- mor not -mor

It is not the purpose of this paper to go into the issue of why such contrasts arise if presupposition is not responsible. But I would like to suggest that the phenomenon here is not unrelated to the one in the last section. In both cases, an asymmetry is observed between the first verbal element and the non-initial elements; and in both cases, grammatical rather than semantic/pragmatic explanations need to be sought for.

5. INDEPENDENT SUPPORT

The restriction that presupposition cannot be questioned is part of a more general constraint against predicating on (either asserting or questioning) the presupposed. Asserting the presupposed, either positively or negatively, can lead to infelicity as well. In the positive cases, redundancy results and in the negative cases, contradictions. In the following, we will focus on questioning in general. So far, the prohibition against questioning the presupposed is stated for A-not-A questions only. But I hypothesize that it must be true of all questions. I state this generalized principle in (48) :

(48) In ANY question, the questioned part cannot be presupposed.

In the following, I will justify the generalized principle by using evidence from different types of questions. To the extent that the principle is validated, it constitutes independent support for the present analysis.

5.1. The restriction in other choice-type questions

The present account is not only necessary in accounting for the A-not-AB sub-type, it is also needed for basically the same constraint in the AB-not-A subtype:

(49) *Ni chang qu xuexiao bu qu?
you often go school not go
'Do you often go to school?'

It is also needed for alternative questions:

(50) *Ni chang qu haishi bu qu?
you often go or not go
'Do you often go?'

As was pointed out in 2.4, such examples are not accommodated by accounts such as Ernst (1994), which crucially depends on the postulation of the question operator [+Qu] in the A-not-AB subtype alone.

5.2. Restriction on interpretation of particle questions

The most interesting independent support for the generalized principle is also the most surprising in that it points clearly to the similarity between particle questions and A-not-A questions with

respect to presuppositional structure. In (51), I reproduced the contrast between particle and A-not-A questions again:

(51) a. Ni chang qu ma?
you often go PRT.
'Do/did you often go?'

b. *Ni chang qu bu qu?
you often go not go

Although the particle question (51a) is well-formed and the A-not-A question (51b) is ill-formed, this is just a superficial difference. In fact, the particle question is subject to the same restriction that the A-not-A question is. The particle question can only have the interpretation where the adverb *chang* and not the verb *qu* is questioned. This is amply clear from the possible responses to the particle question, as we seen in (52):

(52) a. Wo chang qu.
I often go
'I often go. /Yes, often'

b. *(Wo) qu.
I go.

The only possibility is (52a), where the adverb *chang* is included as a necessary part of the answer. The answer (52b) is bad, because it answers with only the presupposed.

The similarity between A-not-A and particle questions can also be demonstrated another way:

(53) a. *Ni chang QU ma?
you often go PRT.
'Do you often GO?'

b. *Ni chang QU BU QU?
you often go not go
'Do you often GO?'

Just as we cannot repair an ill-formed A-not-A question (53b) by accenting the presupposed verb, in the particle question (53a) we cannot contrastively accent the verb to make it a question about going rather than the frequency of going.

Contrary to popular belief, A-not-A and particle questions do not differ in their observance of the presuppositional constraint. They only differ in the directness in indicating what is presupposed. In A-not-A questions, when the verb is presupposed, the question cannot be formed; in particle questions, however, what is presupposed can only be seen indirectly through the restrictions on possible semantic interpretations, which are apparent only in the larger discourse contexts of question and answer pairs.

5.3. Recursive application of question formation

The second phenomenon that motivates the generalized principle is the mutual exclusiveness of questions. First, the presupposed verbs of wh-questions cannot be questioned using either particle or A-not-A questions:

(54) a. Shei yao shu?
who want book
'Who want books?'

b. *Shei yao bu yao shu?
who want not want book

c. *Shei yao shu ma?
who want book PRT.

Since 'someone wants books' is presupposed in the wh-question (54a), no part of it can be further questioned.

Secondly, presupposed verbs in alternative questions with haishi cannot be questioned using either particle or A-not-A questions:

(55) a. *Ni he CHA haishi he KAFEI ma?
you drink tea or coffee PRT
'Are you drinking TEA or COFFEE?'

b. *Ni he bu he CHA haishi he bu he KAFEI?
you drink not drink tea or drink not drink coffee
'Are you drinking TEA or COFFEE?'

Nor can we have recursive application of wh-questions, since that would also question the presupposed material. In the following example, since 'someone wants apples' is the presupposition of the wh-question, no part of it can be questioned again:

(56) Who wants apples? -------> *What does who want?

Note that despite the pragmatic restrictions on their use, multiple wh-questions such as *Who want what?* are fine. In *Who wants what?* there is no recursive application of wh-question formation and hence no presupposed material is questioned. The presupposition 'someone wants something' at once accommodates both wh-words.

6. SUMMARY

In this paper, I have argued against focus accounts of a restriction in the formation of A-not-A questions. The notion of focus is unclear and neither of the two senses examined is empirically adequate. A simple principle is resorted to using the notion of presupposition. There are several advantages to the present account. First of all, this analysis is able to relate and give a unified account for various phenomena both within A-not-A

questions and across different types of questions. Secondly, the simple principle resorted to is independently needed for not only questions in general but assertions as well. Thirdly, this account provides an explanation for the constraint that the focus accounts did not; and lastly, it allows for possible interaction with focus, which a focus account cannot possibly accommodate. Apparent exceptions are due to separate syntactic constrainsts.

FOOTNOTES:

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1. A-not-A questions are very often treated as a special kind of alternative questions, the difference being that A-not-A questions has 'A' and 'not A' as the alternatives whereas Alternative questions has 'A' and 'B' as the alternatives. This semantic categorization is reinforced by the common syntactic analysis of deriving 'A-not-A' from 'A haishi not A' by co-ordination reduction. Huang (1988) argued against deriving all instances of A-not-A questions by co-ordination reduction. There is also pragmatic difference between Alternative questions and A-not-A questions(See footnote 4 for

details). Hence the decision here to group the questions in Chinese into four types instead of three.

2. According to Zhang (1990), there are four sub-types: [vp neg. vp], [v neg. vp], [vp neg v] and [vp neg.]. This paper will only deal with the first three types. Even so, there are some variations in the form. The negative element 'not' can be realized as either *bu* 'not' or *mei* 'have not' depending on aspect. Alongside the canonical form with the negative element in the middle, i.e. A-not-A, it is also possible to realize the negative feature within the second copy of the verbal element, as with the potential forms. So in addition to 'A-not-A DE R', we can also have 'V DE R V BU R'. (R: result complement; DE/BU: positive/negative infix in potential forms).

3. In Tai (1988), such cases are mentioned as examples of how to account for the distribution of negation and A-not-A questions in terms of 'center of information' rather than the syntactic notion of 'head'. For more on the concept of 'center of information', see footnote 7.

4. Tacitly acknowledging the diversity in what he included as 'focus', Taglicht appealed to Halliday (1967-1968)'s three functions of language, namely, the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual, and suggested that the different focus structures fulfilled different functions.

5. Chafe pointed out (1978:33-38) that (contrastive) focus is often confused with 'new'; Rochemont et al (1990) also cautioned against equating focus with new information, on the one hand, and relating focus and presupposition on the other hand.

6. In contrast to A-not-A questions, which allow contrastive accent on different parts other than the A constituent, alternative questions cannot have contrastive accent on anything other than the alternatives. Here are some examples:

*NI yao he CHA haishi he KAFEI?
you want drink tea or drink coffee
'*Do YOU want to drink TEA or COFFEE?'

This difference between alternative questions and A-not-A questions should have implications for the analysis of the formation of A-not-A questions, which has been analyzed by some as derived from alternative questions. Due to the pragmatic difference between them, it will not be advisable to derive A-not-A questions from alternative questions by co-ordination reduction, as traditionally assumed and argued against by linguists of very different persuasions (Huang 1988, Dai 1990). This does not mean that diachronically, A-not-A questions were not derived from alternative questions. But the process of grammaticalization has changed the pragmatic properties of the A-not-A question.

7. Tai (1988) found it necessary to distinguish between focus and information center. He said: 'Focus involves the packaging (a la Chafe 1976) of information based on the attitude of the speaker, while 'information center' is pragmatically structured and is independent of a speaker's attitude.' The present example (22) strongly supports such a differentiation. If we assume Tai's definition of focus, we are forced to conclude, on the basis of (22), that 'plain' wh-questions are focusless. Then, obviously, the notion of 'focus' will be useless in the analysis of such questions.

8. According to Allerton (1978), given/new is something that applies to individual constituents of sentences that the speaker/reader can construct, but presupposition applies to propositions held to be true.

9. Formally, potential forms are characterized by the infixation of the positive DE or the negative bu between the verb and its resultative complement; semantically, potential forms convey the meaning of 'potential for realizing the result', hence the term 'potential form'.

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